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# A RANGER IN GOD'S RESERVES





**Dr. and Mrs. Heald**

# A RANGER IN GOD'S RESERVES

By Ethel Daniels Hubbard

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**B**Y "God's Reserves" we mean the Great American Desert, with its unique appeal and inexhaustible promise; by the American Desert we indicate the Southwest; and by the Southwest we designate—for purposes of this narrative—Arizona, New Mexico and western Texas. The ranger refers to a man whose life is representative of the noblest history of the Southwest, and, in a peculiar sense, determinative of its future. The man is Josiah H. Heald, New Englander by birth and education, Westerner by necessity as well as choice, cosmopolitan by disposition and outlook. His career is distinctive for its clarity—of mind, achievement, setting.

## His Objective

As a young man, he graduated from Bates College, Maine. He was an interesting figure in student life, because of his natural dignity, his wit, his attractive appearance, his consistent Christian bearing, and his evident purposefulness, to say nothing of his scholarship which made him salutarian of his class. His purposefulness had a clear objective—the Christian ministry, a vocation which had allured from childhood with a singular sense of destiny. From Bates he went to Andover, remaining for a year of graduate study after his regular course was

finished. At college he had formed an attachment which also had the mark of destiny upon it, cemented in the summer of 1884 by his marriage to Mary Katharine Pike, who had been one of the four girl students at Bates: an unusual girl, with a gift of imagination and a friendly personality that vivified every situation which developed.

The first pastorate was as nearly in accord with Dr. Heald's conception of the ministry as could be achieved under the circumstances. He believed that a minister should be ready to go where no one else wanted to go, and this belief would have led him at once to an outpost in foreign or home missionary territory, had it not been for his aged father, who had laid an especial obligation upon his son by the sacrifices he had made for his education. The small church at Bennington, N. H., was the nearest approach to the stringent ideal possible at that time. There in September, 1884, he went through the ordeal of ordination in a service that lost its formidableness and became enjoyable.

In this first parish, the Healds remained six years, an experience summed up in Dr. Heald's parlance, "We did a little good, received more, saw the church double its membership, acquired three precious children and a sheaf of friendships."

### To the West

In 1890 came the decisive move—from New England to the West. His father's



death, together with symptoms of tuberculosis in Dr. Heald, combined to make choice a necessity: he was free to go, and he was compelled to go, to the more salubrious climate of the West. He accepted a call to Trinidad, Colorado, and the two years spent there became crucial in the lives of both husband and wife. After nine months of active ministry, during which a new house of worship was built, Dr. Heald had to relinquish his task or forfeit his health, which was already in menacing condition. A young man was summoned from Yale to take the pastorate, while Dr. Heald continued frequently to preach, and regularly to tend house and children, while Mrs. Heald assumed the maintenance of the family by teaching in the Tillotson Academy. It was a bleak and oppressive period in the family history. "I have not the slightest doubt," declares an associate of those days, "that Dr. Heald's faith and prayer, his serenity, cheerfulness and courage, were, under God, the cause of his recovery and return to work."

In 1892 Dr. Heald, impelled by his health to seek a warmer climate, moved to Nogales, Arizona, and from that time became an exile in the Southwest; an exile, yes, but an indefatigable worker and constructive leader in that stragetic region which marks the border of two nations and distinct races.

It was a proverbial border town, with saloons and gambling dens and a restless, excitable population, with the days of Indian

raids scarcely past, and Mexican revolutions soon to begin. On the other side of the line was the Mexican town of the same name and size, but homogeneous population. Nogales, Arizona, boasted 3,000 inhabitants, classified, according to Dr. Heald's original census, into 500 Americans, 2,500 Mexicans and 25,000 dogs.

### **In a Community of Aliens**

To a New England minister it was almost as foreign a situation as that which confronts the missionary in the Punjab or on the Yangtse, except perhaps the American colony was larger. It meant daily association with people of an alien race, learning their language and tracing the course of their ideas and customs, which harked back to the days of Spanish conquest and beyond. It involved rebuilding the small adobe church, and gathering a congregation of variety and picturesqueness, comprising cowboys and miners from ranch and camp, who often announced it was the first religious service they had attended for five, ten, or twenty-five years.

It meant long and monotonous hours with horse and wagon, over desert and mountain, through canyon and arroyo, to the scattered adobe settlements, which formed what the foreign missionary would call outstations. It meant regular ordination to the ministry for Mrs. Heald, who was often substitute preacher in Nogales and elsewhere. Best

of all, it brought renewal of health to Dr. Heald, in what he calls "the most wonderful climate in the world."

### Work Among the Mexicans

This last acquisition begets a new and vital chapter in the life story of the Healds. From Nogales, they went, in 1900, to San Rafael, New Mexico, to live and work among the Indians in their scattered and primitive villages. This early aspiration to become a foreign missionary was realized within the bounds of the United States.

In such a community, the missionary must become doctor as well as preacher and teacher, for a simple people who have learned to trust his goodness and wisdom, will turn naturally to him for succor in bodily distress. Books of medicine rather than theology engrossed Dr. Heald's hours of study, while by reiterated exhortation, enforced by a supply of anti-toxin and a quarantine proclamation from the county health officer, he succeeded in checking the spread of the great diphtheria epidemic of 1903. Six months later, his youngest son, Josiah Eugene, was smitten with the disease and left paralyzed and helpless when its course was run. For his alleviation the family moved to Albuquerque, leaving with reluctance the Mexican villages, in which Dr. Heald declares the most interesting period of his life to have been spent.

While at San Rafael, Dr. Heald had become superintendent of the Mexican schools conducted by the Congregational Education Society, six in all, with two teachers in each, and a total enrollment of three to four hundred pupils. At San Mateo, Seboyeta, Cubera and other similar villages, twenty-five miles apart in an uninhabited wilderness, the American teachers, women for the most part, struggled with problems enough to daunt the persistence of uninspired mortals. The nearest physician and church were sometimes one hundred miles away; the adobe houses in which it was their fate to dwell, were leaky and dilapidated; their neighbors could not comprehend the reason for their presence; and the schools were greeted with unconcern, if not overt opposition. With all their slim resources and giant obstacles, Dr. Heald recognized the potency of these village schools for future generations, and with his singular clarity of speech and telling humor, made their value known in conference and assembly.

### **The Need of Versatility**

To most readers, the word "superintendent" has a technical and prosaic connotation, with little of surprise or human appeal to waylay interest. Not so Dr. Heald's superintendency; it is defined in terms of lasting friendships, God-given insight, and wise projects that touch the future of a state as well as the fortunes of a race.



## A Big Parish

Later the Congregational Home Missionary Society made him superintendent of their churches in Arizona, New Mexico and Western Texas, with El Paso as headquarters. He was now a double superintendent, holding office under two organizations, for he continued for twelve years longer to superintend the Mexican schools conducted at first by the Education Society, later by the American Missionary Association. Travel, travel continued to be the brand of his calling; 25,000 miles a year to schools and churches sometimes one hundred and forty miles apart.

The vocation of Congregational superintendent in the Southwest has its peculiar characteristics which are interesting to analyze. It is a fairly unique assignment and it takes an equally unique personality to conform to its dimensions. For one thing, it requires the bodily resilience of a pioneer to relish and endure the life, but the life itself creates the vigor it demands, even for a man handicapped at the start as was Dr. Heald and as are hundreds of others who go to live in the Southwest.

Another specification is the love of folks. individual people, queer and obstreperous as well as docile and agreeable. "A little love for people in the concrete," wrote Dr. Heald in an epigrammatic essay upon "The Ideal Missionary," "is worth more for missionary purposes than a good deal of love for the

world in the abstract. Some people have a good deal of what they were pleased to call humanitarianism, who are not very human and don't like folks. If you don't like folks. don't be a missionary." To an inexhaustible friendliness, the missionary in this corner of the world must add a magnanimity and patience which are monumental and derivable only from God. "Dr. Heald will work for six months," observes a former associate, "to get the right man upon the field, watch the man grow, begin to see daylight, and then receive notice that he is going back East or North to a larger field. Does he grow bitter or excited? Not at all. He congratulates his man upon his success and then starts out quietly to locate another."

Finally, the man who would fully serve the Southwest, must understand and love his world, accept its idiosyncrasies and grasp with inspired foresight, its potentialities. He must

see Him there,  
As He sits alone on the blue-gray hills,

Dr. Heald has belonged to his world; he has responded to the miraculous color and sunlight on the plains, the intriguing mystery of mesa, pueblo and cliff-dwelling, and to all the adventurous life of the cattle ranch. the copper mine and the Reclamation Service, as well as the more primitive life of man embodied in the Penitentes and the other ancient customs of an ancient race. He has

assuredly "seen Him there," and sought to make Him regnant in a region, which, by natural endowment, is largely expressive of His mystery and infinity, but which reveals in sad contrast, the inadequate life of humanity.

### Dr. Heald's Family

From the foregoing, it is easy to surmise Dr. Heald's significance to his family and home. It is well known that Mrs. Heald has made her own distinctive contribution to the Southwest, having preached in its churches, taught in its schools, absorbed its lore and dreamed its future. The four children furnish excellent examples of the value of a frontier parsonage in the lives of the second generation. Kenneth Conrad, a graduate of Colorado College, was chosen for the Yale Peruvian Expedition and is now head of the Oil Department of the United States Geological Survey; while Clarence Edward, an engineer by training, became a major in command of four companies during the War, was retained as officer in the Reserve and died of sleeping sickness in 1920. Elizabeth, the only daughter, graduated from Pomona College, and became Biology Research Assistant in the University of California, while Josiah Eugene, the diphtheria victim at San Rafael, is a business man in southern California. These few facts of family history scarcely serve to capture the charm, humor, spontaneity and stern idealism which guests in the Heald household are wont to report.

As one reads, particularly as one writes the record of Dr. Heald's ministry, the wonder grows that so few young preachers and teachers are moved to forsake the beaten tracks of the East and venture into the more spacious opportunity of the West and Southwest. Why a person should choose to duplicate the career of thousands, when he might be original and definitely creative of unique results, is hard to explain, except for the obsessive hold of custom. This is not to say that Dr. Heald would have repeated the conventional career of ministers even had he remained in the East. His preaching ability alone would make him an outstanding figure in any locality. But it does venture to assert that some rare quality of mind and soul has escaped and matured in the ampler environment of the Southwest.

The Congregational Home Missionary Society  
287 Fourth Avenue  
New York